

# The Nation

## Reviews.

### FAIRY LAUGHTER.

- "Christmas Tales of Flanders." Illustrated by JEAN DE BOSSCHERE. (Heinemann. 12s. 6d. net.)
- "Twenty-Two Goblins." Translated from the Sanskrit by ARTHUR RYDER. With Twenty Illustrations in Color by PERHAM W. NAHL. (Dent. 7s. 6d. net.)
- "Serbian Fairy Tales." Translated from the Serbian by MADAME ELSIE L. MUATOVICH. Illustrated by SIDNEY STANLEY. (Heinemann. 6s. net.)
- "Once on a Time." By A. A. MILNE. Illustrated by H. M. BROCK. (Hodder & Stoughton. 6s. net.)
- "Fairy Stories from Hans Andersen." With 48 Colored Plates. By MARGARET W. TARRANT. (Ward, Lock. 3s. 6d. net.)
- "Hans Andersen's Fairy Tales." Set forth in simple words for Young Children. By WILLIAM WOODBURN. Illustrated by GORDON ROBINSON. (Chambers.)
- "Tales from the Russian" of MME. KABALENSKY. Translated by G. JENNER. (Blackie. 1s. 3d. net.)
- "Knock Three Times." By MARION ST. JOHN WEBB. Illustrated by MARGARET W. TARRANT. (Harrap. 5s. net.)

How little, in the days before the war, one used to hear of fairy laughter! Not the mischievous giggle of Puck or the faint laughter of unseen elves dying away to silence in the moonlight, but the warm, human, sympathetic laughter of the fireside Christmas fairy—the kind of fairy whom many of us suspected of being, like Cinderella's godmother, little else after all but a human being who understood, and who could do wonderful things.

A year or two ago there was a great cult in a revival of that idea of the fairies which once terrorized the unco-ordinated imaginations of the folk. Some people would actually rise in wrath at anyone who suggested a self-respecting modern fairy being capable of doing good, and of helping us poor humans to "live happily ever after." It was then averred an insult to fairy-hood. Your true fairy had to be a cold, heartless creature of another plane, and had to be spelt "faërie."

It is possible, of course, that in those times there was not enough trouble in the world, and so those other-plane fairies had to be called in to make more. Things, however, are different now. Melancholy, horror, cruelty—they may exist in another plane than this, but for ourselves we have had enough of them. So the fairies that we want now are the laughing fairies—if need be, the fairies that are frankly human projections, works of human art. To open the Christmas books of this fourth war-year is to realize more and more that the laughing fairies were there all the time. There were plenty of them in the old folk-stories, if one liked to take them that way; and it is very significant that all the newly-invented fairies are laughing fairies too—all those, at any rate, that have any chance of acceptance.

Here, for instance, in this delightful collection of the "Christmas Tales of Flanders," every page is pervaded with a kind of Rabelaisian jollity. It does not represent by any means the whole scope of the Flanders folk-lore. There is no mention in it of Ulenspiegel, and nothing approaching de Coster's lurid and Dantesque imaginings, though we pay several visits to a nether-world. There is, on the other hand, no trace of Maeterlinckian wistfulness; no worry about conscious symbolism. It is just so much good, honest smack-back humor and lively adventure, full

of the exuberant humanity of Rubens' countrymen, which one finds here almost equally shared by fairies and mortals. De Bosschère's drawings and designs are, in the main, a revel of strong character and rich color, with the beauty, sometimes, of an old tapestry, and here and there a curiously Japanese lightness of fancy and delicacy of touch.

Many of the stories are from the common stock of all nations. We have "Get up and Bar the Door, O!" in Flemish form; also the story we tell of "King John and the Abbot of Glastonbury," the inevitable Flemish "Hop-o'-my-Thumb," and that universal story of losing exchanges which Goldsmith may well have heard upon the banks of the "lazy Scheldt" and transferred to the "Vicar of Wakefield" in the doings of Moses at the Fair. All, however, are instinct with a characteristic vitality, and some, like that of the old woman who hung Death in the tree, and those of "Little Half-Cock" and of "Blacksmith Verloren," could hardly be expressed better. Are we indebted, by the way, to fact or to the translation for a reference to "bridge" as the Flemish peasant's favorite card-game?

Not quite the same quality of humor, perhaps, can be credited to the "Serbian Fairy Tales," unless it be in the story of the old man who had a hundred sons and went out to find wives for them. But at least there is an exhilaration in their wild extravagance, and in the breathless movement of such stories as that of the Bear's Son and of "The Golden Apple Tree and the Nine Pea-hens," which Mr. Gosse chose for the "Allies' Fairy Book" last year. Of the "universals," "Pappallina" is as spirited a version of "Cinderella" as could be wished, even if the step-daughter goes to church instead of to the ball; and there are not many European "Hop-o'-my-Thumbs" to compare with "Sir Peppercorn."

For a humor approaching comedy it would be difficult to beat in their own kind the twenty-two stories which Mr. Arthur W. Ryder has gathered from the Sanskrit into his very-choicely produced volume, "Twenty-two Goblins." In themselves, doubtless, these stories were the great-to-the-nth-grandparents of some very similar western stories. But not because they were written down first. The value they got from their Sanskrit origin is the value that all folk-stories get from a collector of genius—the value that the Homeric legends got from the old Smyranean, and that the Perrault stories got from Louis XIV's sprightly old courtier. They get the touch of individual art, the sense of form, the piquant comedy suggested by the civilised mind.

The very idea itself suggests a comedy—the King who had to answer the goblin's questions on the stories—for each is a "puzzle-story"—or lose his life. As puzzle-stories they are cameos of world-wisdom. At the back of all, the simple Oriental ideal of "black eyes and lemonade" lures us always as in the "Arabian Nights." A little persistently, perhaps. There is something not quite healthy for Western folk in the eternal languishing Prince and Lotus-Princess. But there are germs of other ideals incidentally. King Shudraka at least had glimmerings of that high sense of kingly duty that shone forth in "good Haroun Alraschid."

So we come to the frankly individual fairy-stories, and the more we go into them the more we find the humor of the folk subtilizing itself into the comedy of the literary artist. There is Mr. A. A. Milne's "Once on a Time," for example, a kind of burlesque of "The Sleeping Beauty," with each character a perfect modern in medieval guise,—the whole thing a fairy-novel suffused with the wit of "Mr. Punch's" dramatist. Yet it is true fairy-laughter. It is not laughter at the fairies, nor indeed at mortals—for one loves all Mr. Milne's creations, his King Merrywig, his Princess Hyacinth, his Prince Udo, and, more than all, his soulful adventuress, the lovely Belvain. It is laughter

with both, as true comedy should be. And so far as the old story was concerned, the laughter was there already. Turn to old Perrault, and see!

Then there is Hans Andersen—twice represented in this bundle, and very beautifully in both cases. Hans Andersen's nature tended naturally, perhaps, to sentiment rather than to humor, though wit twinkles through many an immortal dialogue. But there is good broad laughter to be found even in Hans Andersen as well as those "smiles that fade in tears." One such case is that rattling satire, "The Emperor's New Clothes," as reckless and free-hearted as anything of Carroll's. This, by the way, has been missed out of the selection "for young children." It is difficult to tell why. Surely little lungs were made to crow over such a vision as that of the Emperor "processing" stark-naked through applauding multitudes. Children, who cannot appreciate anything like the full sentimental beauty of, say, "The Snow Queen," can see the fun of that scene as well as anyone. Can it be that the Emperor's exploit is considered not quite "proper" for the nursery? Away with the thought!

In Mme. Kabalensky's "Tales," one has to admit that the fairy-laughter is not very loud, but laughter, as we all know, is a rare Russian product and is seldom found (outside Gogol) unmixed with sadness. They are charming little nature-stories, exactly on the Hans Andersen model, and there is one of them which is not a whit less charming for its touch of comedy.

It is the story of a nightingale's little daughter who used to sit awake all night (with her mother) to listen in wonder to "father singing." How proud the family were of his vocal gifts—gifts of which he himself was not unconscious! But one spring-time there came a rival—a brilliant young tenor from abroad—who, as he sang upon a neighbouring spray, cast very particular glances in the direction of Little Miss Nightingale herself. And somehow she thought he sang "even better than papa!" There is a gleam of true fairy-laughter there. Though poor papa never sang again, he soon had one daughter off his hands!

When Molly went to bed one night she took the pin-cushion with her (for it was a birthday present) and placed it on her dressing table. She stuck a long pin in it, and got into bed. The night being fine, the pin-cushion turned into a pumpkin, to the astonishment of Molly, who followed it; for the pumpkin left the house. For the continuation of this story you must Knock Three Times.

#### THE BOYS' STORY.

"With Haig on the Somme." By HERBERT STRANG. Illustrated by T. H. ROBINSON. (Milford. 3s. 6d. net.)

"With Haig in Flanders." By CAPT. F. S. BRERETON. Illustrated by J. E. SUTCLIFFE. (Blackie. 3s. 6d. net.)

"At All Risks." By JOHN FINBARR. Illustrated by C. E. BROCK. (Milford. 3s. 6d. net.)

"How we Baffled the Germans." By ERIC WOOD. Illustrated by ARCHIBALD WEBB. (Nelson. 3s. 6d. net.)

"Under the White Ensign." By PERCY F. WESTERMAN. Illustrated by E. S. HODGSON. (Blackie. 3s. net.)

"Conscript Tich." By JACK SPURR. (Chambers. 2s. 6d. net.)

"Cheerio!" By J. F. TILSLEY. (Chambers. 2s. 6d. net.)

"Woolly of the Wilds." By ROBERT LEIGHTON. (Ward, Lock. 2s. 6d. net.)

If we were ever in danger of forgetting the war, the writers of boys' stories would assuredly remind us of it. Out of the eight books before us, seven are tales of the Great Struggle; only one author has the courage to leave the subject alone. It is interesting to note the different phases dealt with. Mr. Strang, Mr. John Finbarr, Mr. Spurr, and Captain Brereton declare for the Western Front. Major Eric Wood is for the South African Campaign, Mr. Westerman for the Mediterranean and the Ægean. Mr. Tilsley's collection of clever short stories are concerned with many aspects of the war rather than any particular campaign. Thus a solid half of these representative writers plump for France and Flanders. At first sight, this might seem a wayward choice. For the Western Front is, from a writer's

standpoint, the least picturesque of all the battlefields; the least adaptable for "thrills" with scenic embellishments; in a word, the least "romantic" setting of any. For "glamor," of a sort that is fitly put between the picture-covers of an adventure book, one should surely go to the snow-clad Alps of the Isonzo, or the Caucasus, or Serbia, or the one Land of Promise (at present)—Palestine.

Yet, after reflection, we think we know why the West, in spite of its obvious drawbacks, finds favor as a background. We hear more of the West, from one weary year's end to another, than of any other quarter where armies fight. It is the West that, because of its predominant importance to ourselves, has pride of place in the news-columns. Moreover, the "atmosphere" of the fighting there is nearer and more familiar to all of us; not only the newspapers, but the soldiers who are perpetually streaming across the Channel, for hospital or for short leave, tell us all the little stories that are good for us to hear. Hence, after three and a-half years of it, we have absorbed the moral and physical atmosphere of what goes on; have absorbed it unconsciously, as it were. How much more completely, then, must this atmosphere have been absorbed by the literary folk whose business it is to catch an effective setting for a yarn of adventure; for these must have been waiting with their mouths open to inhale every breath of it.

So, when we opened "With Haig on the Somme," we looked not merely for an exciting story—that was a foregone conclusion from Mr. Strang's name—but for some powerful reflection of the "real thing" in his fiction. And the real thing, in externals, is certainly here; Mr. Strang has all the technicalities of the fighting business at his finger ends; he takes his characters "over the top" and into German dug-outs in the most workmanlike style. It was only when we had finished the story that we realized that, with all its craftsmanship and carefully acquired knowledge, it was just a boy's story *à la mode*; written, that is to say, with one eye on the boy as a possible recruit. Or it may be that all the exciting things in the story obliterated the atmosphere; we do not know. Nor do we profess to know what war is really like, since we have only studied it through one or two individual temperaments, and these are always untrustworthy; we can only feel instinctively what it is *not* like. Apart from this, it is only the excellence of Mr. Strang's story that made us think seriously about the matter at all. His hero, Barnard, is a likeable and consistent character. As one of the "misunderstood," he suffers some hard buffets in his adventurous career, but as he is a genuinely misunderstood, and not a won't-be-understood, he finally emerges triumphant, not only over the Germans he encounters, but over Fisher, his old friend in the Australian days, who had been forced to the conclusion that Barnard was a coward, and had to be shown his error pretty plainly before he retracted. Spurling, the factory-owner of German origin, and Estaunier, the innkeeper, make as pretty a pair of spies as one could wish for; and one's heart warms to Madame Lecomte, who mothers and befriends the soldiers billeted on her. Pedro, the sinister dwarf and servant of Estaunier, almost arouses sympathy by his dog-like devotion to his rascally master.

"With Haig in Flanders" opens with the Derby days in a Somersetshire village. Roger Norman and Frank River have a mutual dislike for each other. Frank, worsted in an encounter, revenges himself by hiring two scoundrels to thrash his opponent, and Norman, in defending himself, knocks one of them so badly that he thinks he has killed him. Terror and remorse cause him to bolt from the village; he meets a soldier in the train, and, after confiding in him, decides to enlist. And so to the trenches in Flanders, where he arrives in nice time for the Somme Offensive. Having earned his commission by skill and gallantry, he is appointed to command a Tank. The adventures of his craft give the author an opportunity for some very vivid descriptive writing; throughout, indeed, the local color is as convincing as Captain Brereton's best can be. Unfortunately, the Tank fails in an awkward situation, and Roger and his party ultimately find themselves prisoners of the enemy. Their escape from a bombed train, their recapture through the treachery of a spy, identified as one of Roger's old-time assailants, and their ultimate winning through to safety and home make sufficiently exciting reading.

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"At all Risks" is a milder tale, in spite of its title. Somewhere in France was a chateau where in August, 1914, Alan and Victor, an English and a French boy, both of non-military age, heard of the great war that had come to pass. They promptly formed the Society of "The Youth of the Allies," and Victor made a cipher code of his own. But before the Society could get to work, a live British colonel came to stay at Alan's mother's house, and Alan volunteered to execute a commission for this important personage, involving a bicycle ride to a friend's house, eighteen miles distant. Coming home, he missed the road; and then the fun began, for he had heard the guns booming, and was hot on the trail of battle. He got there, in time for an artillery duel and a pleasant chat with the General. After that he cycled right into some Uhlans, and found himself incriminated by a fragment of Victor's wretched cipher which he had kept in his pocket. The cipher beat the Germans, as well it might, but they consigned Alan to an unknown destination by a slow train. Of course, he escaped—he had to—with the aid of a French ally, and after a multitude of thrilling adventures, including a ride in an aeroplane, got safely home. We note some pleasantly imaginative descriptions of war episodes that suggest the thing seen; and there is power in the pen-picture of the remote French countryside quivering in the August heat, a little anxious perhaps, but still not greatly disturbed, though the German retreat from the Marne was fashioning its bloodstained track a few leagues distant. This book is well done.

How Jimmy Walsh and Freddy Moore struck the scent of Maritz's rebellion in South Africa; how they contrived to get the news to General Botha; and how they participated in some "minor," but exciting, operations on the border of the German territory, and after snaring their particular enemy, Farmer Stein, set sail for England with the object of joining up for the bigger business over here; this is the theme of "How we Baffled the Germans." The *mis-en-scène* is a pleasant change, not to mention the simpler style of warfare pursued by these super-boys; and the action proceeds unhaltingly. Mr. Westerman's story, too, "Under the White Ensign," will please the many admirers of this author's sea yarns. The armed merchant-cruiser on which Sub-Lieutenants Webb and Haynes find themselves, is torpedoed somewhere near Tripoli, and her crew have to repel a fierce attack by the Senussi. There are plenty of encounters with enemy aircraft and spies—what boy's book, indeed, is complete without a German spy?—and some tramping through the desert. And we must not forget the dog-hero Laddie. But the best part of all is the sea part, in describing which Mr. Westerman excels.

"Conscript Tich" is the story of a Cockney shopman, who begins by holding those old-fashioned ideas about the liberty of the subject, which "Dora" has by now rendered obsolete; and ends, after a few attempts at self-assertion, in becoming a first-rate soldier. The account of his appearance before a tribunal is convincing enough to suggest an actual experience; so, too, is the tale of his first hand-to-hand fight with the Boches. Mr. Spurr, while all for the duty of patriotic service, shows a somewhat unusual determination to forgo the usual limelight effects; his book gains in artistry accordingly. We can extend similar commendation to Mr. Tilsley's volume of short soldier yarns, reprinted under the title of "Cheerio!" The note of these varies from caustic to gay; but there is hardly one that does not score a good point. We like especially "The White Feather," describing the ignominious defeat of one of those "Why-aren't-you-in-khaki?" women who defiled London in 1914. Another excellent story with a wholesome moral is "The Souvenir." Both the last two writers attempt to get below the outer skin of things, both with a fair measure of success; but we are afraid the books will appeal less to boys than to some of their elders.

We cannot find space to describe "Woolly of the Wilds" as we would like. It is a story of adventure in the Canadian backwoods, and in reading it one forgets all about the war. There are Red Indians and half-breeds and wolves and all the rest of the merry tribe that used to make the blood surge to the boy-reader's head. Mr. Leighton weaves them into a fine, bustling story. We ourselves are grateful to him for leaving it alone.

## WHITE LIES.

- "The Madcap of the School." By ANGELA BRAZIL. (Blackie. 3s. 6d. net.)  
 "Joan Tudor's Triumph." By E. L. HAVERFIELD. (Milford. 5s.)  
 "A School Camp Fire." By ELSIE OXENHAM. (Chambers. 4s. net.)  
 "Little Mother." By RUTH BROWN MCARTHUR. (Harrap. 6s.)  
 "Robin Goodfellow, and Other Fairy Plays." By NETTA SYRETT. (Lane. 2s. 6d. net.)  
 "Captain Cub." By ETHEL TURNER. (Ward, Lock. 3s. net.)  
 "Patricia Pat." By ISABEL MAUD PEACOCKE. (Ward, Lock. 3s. 6d. net.)  
 "The Pearl." By G. WINIFRED TAYLOR. (Blackwell. 6s.)  
 "Munition Mary." By BRENDA GIVVIN. (Milford. 3s. 6d. net.)

THERE was a girl, we knew her once, who wore a white piqué sailor suit and whose talk was all of a certain dear Miss Pratt of the Bolster Street High School. If this girl read a book it was with a view to learning what Miss Pratt would think about it; the violet and the rose returned each year it seemed solely with the intention of decorating Miss Pratt's desk. If the contemplation of death disturbed this girl's midnights the grave held no other sting for her than the certainty of leaving dear Miss Pratt. To this girl the prospect of holidays was a prospect of prussic acid. If she smiled at herself sometimes and did not signify her approbation of her beloved by throwing herself from a fourth floor window like the school-girl in a recent clever novel, that was not because of any insincerity in her devotion. She adored until she grew out of adoration and white piqué suits together.

Every form in a girl's school, we fancy, contains an example or two of this kind of hero worship. Derisive school-fellows describe it otherwise. It is curious that such a typical feature of school-life should go unremarked by all writers of books for girls (except Miss Evelyn Sharp if we remember aright a story called "Green Roses") and be treated with grim and even hideous seriousness by writers for grown-ups whose sense of the comic is, to put it mildly, intermittent. In all the books in the list at the head of this review teachers are either remote and awful presences, or butts. They are not closely knit with the fabric of daily existence as in real schools. However, since reality is denied us, let us confess at once that we prefer our teachers as butts. They are more enlivening that way. Miss Angela Brasil's "Madcap of the School" has the makings in it of a feminine "Stalky," and she fails only in a certain flatness in the working out of her schemes. Miss Brasil's school girls, however, talk for the most part like real school-girls, though they are more fortunate than their fellows in arranging burlesque Zeppelin raids, capturing real German prisoners, and hoaxing to the tops of their bents the excellent ladies who have charge of them, called respectively the Wasp and the Bumble Bee. Every girl with dark curls who has ever been given an "order mark" will feel a bit of a heroine after reading this book. We predict for it a wide popularity. And Miss Brasil's particular form of mad-cappishness, we are glad to say, has no connection with scarlet Tam-o'-shanters. These girls are physically models for any young person if we may judge by the unusually charming illustrations. They quite justify Miss Brasil as a companion for the young, and more than make amends to our mind for what responsible persons will be bound to consider an encouragement of impudence and disorder.

The author of "Joan Tudor's Triumph" has a much heavier hand. Where Miss Brasil gives us Raymonde, Fauvette and Ardiune (these, gentle reader, at random, are some of the names), Miss Haverfield is content with Joan and Kitty and Rachel. That the bad girl is called Ruby should be a source of satisfaction to everyone. Some day we hope to read a realistic study of this sort of girl—the "bad influence" who poisons boarding school for many of her contemporaries. But the hope grows fainter as we contemplate this pile of volumes. Anyone who has been a schoolgirl knows that rule-breaking and impudence are not the indispensable adjuncts of a golden heart. Miss Haverfield knows this and she knows that lies are sometimes told for ends more practical than joking; but lack of natural dialogue makes her work appear less true than Miss Brasil's. Ruby is bad; but with the wrong sort

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"The Blessed Birthday" is a Christmas miracle-play. It did not delight us. To be naive of manner is one thing; feebleness and jerkiness are other things. Moreover, a sense of humor is surely nowhere more indispensable than in this kind of imitation of old ways, and that sense is conspicuously lacking here. The Angels, whose "tongue is that of Holy Writ," speak in that tongue with a mechanical glibness of antiphony, with an effect as of puppets or gramophones.

"Animals" come next, and we are bound to make a confession. We had thought "The Adventures of Mabel" rather poor stuff, but a thirteen-year-old nephew found them so absorbing that he finished them in a morning, and cordially recommended them for his smaller brother. We had been offended by some matters which he entirely ignored, and as the book was written for his like, we bow to his impression. Yet we cannot refrain from pointing out with reprobation the terrorizing of the Goat and Mabel's fib about it, and the disagreeable laughter of the Good Wolf at the Bad one. The "Animal Party," however, is a delightful episode. Some of the uncolored pictures are amusing, but the colored ones are poor in every sense—that of Mabel taming the wild horse is about as bad a picture as well can be.

"Ver Beck's Bears" seem to be recognized humorists and favorites; they come on to us from several of the most prominent American magazines. These must have suffered a sea-change since we were well acquainted with them, if the Bears conform to their present standard (in the juvenile section, at any rate), and the Bears evidently do. We found them dull, ugly, and only very feebly funny. The verses are on a basis of "Mother Goose," with "new lines" by Hanna Riou, in this manner:—Bo-Peep finds her sheep, "but it made her heart bleed, for they'd left their tails behind them"—as the picture demonstrates—in the jaws of three bears. That is the kind of thing, and it hardly seems to justify so pretentious a setting and so lavish an expenditure of glittering paper.

"The Man in the Moon" is the one book in this batch where imagination has a word to say. Here are verses and pictures of real quality; here also are ideas of originality and tenderness. "The High Hills of Kund" has a haunting lilt in the song and a wild beauty in the pictures; "The Wind Elf and the Weathercock" is delightful also in both respects. Without this book our circle would have failed to join; but Imagination takes hands friendly with Fancy, is given a show in the very gaily and—there is no other word for it!—fashionably illustrated "Ride on a Rocking-Horse," where a little boy goes to fairyland on his rocking-horse, which can gallop and trot on Midsummer Day. This book is warmly to be recommended. We gather, from "Little Miss Anzac," that Australia is, even more than America, a land of spoilt children. The little girl who here tells the adventures of her loved wooden doll was a careless and a naughty and an extremely selfish little girl, who forgot her doll in the yard, and howled for it at night until her mother went, in drenching rain, to find it. Another night, for the same reason, she howled so badly that her father had to take her out into the garden, lest the other people in the hotel should be disturbed. No word of reproach seems to have been thought necessary by anyone; Australian parents must be singularly malleable. We cannot recommend a book so profoundly immoral; but the story is well told, and the pictures are bright and graphic.

"The Betty Book," with pictures by Anne Anderson, is very attractive; pleasant color, pretty child, and innumerable illustrations of her and the two dolls, with letterpress of the slightest, make up a volume sure to charm a little girl for a short time. That the time will be very short there is no denying; the staying-power of "The Betty Book" is nil; and that we think, in these days, is rather a bad mark against it.

"Mrs. Strang's Annual for Baby" has the same defect; it is too literally an annual, designed for the smallest, who will so soon be less small. But, for its day, it will serve its purpose; pictures gaudy, letterpress in baby-language, pages of great thickness, that a baby's fingers can easily turn.

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And so the circle closes. There is much within it, but, returning to our first impression, we do not think that there is quite enough. We shall remember none of these books but "The Madonna of the Goldfinch" and "The Man in the Moon."

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THERE is always one youngster in a family we find it difficult to fit with a book—or there ought to be one in a well-regulated family, if only to demonstrate the need for the regulations. That purchase of an uncertainty turns the book-buying into something adventurous, when otherwise it would have been no more than common shopping. We therefore get some fun out of it. It is as good as going back so many Christmases that we dare not count them to select the sort of book the youth we knew best of all would have shouted to possess. The odd shelf for us, where the unexpected books are! That shelf cannot be too long—though we are bound to say it is much shorter than usual this Christmas. But the more we search it, the younger we get. We meet old friends there—and we had not seen them for years. This kind of shopping takes a long time.

There is one great change we notice on this shelf. There used to be subjects in literature, history, and science, of considerable interest to us once. Books upon them, suited to the age when our interest was awakened, were not to be had. The authors in those days, we seem to remember, addressed only those of their own capacity. Children were not supposed to be present. If they attended, then they were presumed to have a vocabulary as long as a deep-sea line; something to get near the bottom in seas where there were no soundings. We were supposed to understand far references and subtle asides which fairly stunned young enthusiasm.

It is not so to-day. The astronomer takes the little child by the hand, and at least tries to make his business as fascinating as the "Arabian Nights." The geologist does not try the Nebula Hypothesis on the youngster. It would never fit. He takes him to a quarry near home. The book on natural history is not full of skeletons, but of life. History is not dates and kings—not so much as it was, anyway—but now and then the people who worked for a living in the past come into it. Literature is not a means to an academic degree, but is the reflection of ourselves when alone we look at the stars.



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As an example of what we mean, here is Dr. Derryhouse on geology. The name of the subject is repellent, we know. Earth-lore would be better. Geology is a name ugly enough to daunt the hardiest. But of all the sciences, this is the right one for a child to begin upon. It leads naturally to the rest. It is the magic gate. In the past it was the way for books upon it to assume one was merely "taking it up" (for some ulterior purpose; one would not do it otherwise, of course), and they started by heaving palæozoic rocks (which no man really understands) at one's head; and got down to the living earth when sheer obstinacy was just keeping one awake. But this book has another method. There is a little history and preliminary stuff, and then the author takes the reader right away on a geological excursion to a new country, to learn how that country was made; and he begins with the mysteries of the strange sea-beach. That is the right method. If a boy shows any curiosity about his local quarry, or the layers of earth in a neighboring railway cutting, this book may be the means of keeping him quiet, with an active mind, for years to come, for it will get him inside the magic gate, and leave him there.

Or this book on the birds by Mr. Beach Thomas and Mr. Collett. It is a delightful volume. It makes one wonder why the history of nature was ever called "dry." No healthy boy or girl, already wondering at the world about them, trying to get things in some order and relationship, who already know the missel from the song-thrush, and understand that the hedge-sparrow is not a sparrow at all, but would praise the good soul who saw this book on the odd shelf, and remembered them. Mr. Beach Thomas communicates his enthusiasm for the birds; and the illustrations to the book are more than charming, for they are an aid to recognition of the species described.

France to our children to-day means a great idea; but a very vague one still. Most of them begin with France when she rudely interrupted the Saxons here; and so are in the right mood for the good hidings she got at Crecy, Poitiers, and Agincourt; after which France fades almost out of history till Trafalgar, and ends at Waterloo. But France, many claim, is ahead of Europe in a number of the things which matter most to men, a national achievement not to be gained without long and interesting laboring by a superior people. Professor Hudson's History of France, he tells us, was begun without any anticipation of the crisis which, in August, 1914, was to unite France and England in a common cause. It would be unfair to the author to suggest that this book is only for the mind young in years. The young mind, though a little bald by now, can read it with thorough enjoyment, for this book is a serious contribution to history, by an admitted authority, of great skill as a writer, and of humane and enlightened views. It is an illustrated history of the French nation and its development, from the time of the Gallia Transalpina of the Romans to the establishment of the Third Republic.

The next volume on the odd shelf stirs curious emotions. "As I walked through the wilderness of the world," it begins, "I lighted on a certain place where there was a den, and laid me down in that place to sleep; and, as I slept, I dreamed a dream." We remember well what that dream worked in us long ago. John Bunyan, in these days when political rhetoric on resounding tea-trays deafens us so much that we get to think the sincere use of words, however desirable, is out-of-date, is a helpful corrective. This edition of the great book is an excellent one, in good type—not that tiny print in the edition of our youth which needed so much courage to attack—and the illustrations by Byam Shaw are likely to persuade a child, for its own good, to go after the pilgrim on his strange adventures.

In his narratives of some happy warriors, Mr. Henry Newbolt refurbishes, till they shine as new, the armor of the medieval knights and their ideals of chivalry. Chivalry was a plan of life, he tells us, a conscious ideal, meant to save Europe from barbarism. "It still survives, and still gives the answer to both barbarians and pacifists."

We frankly declare to Mr. Newbolt that in a book for boys, who will take what he says without question, this is hardly playing the game; for, apart from that great and sorrowful story of Cervantes, where we really find an ideal knight testing his chivalrous principles in vain against

the world as it is, we well remember the awful gang, historical and authentic this time (prompted within their shining armor by motives which get a criminal to-day from the New Cut to gaol by the shortest route), upon whom Froissart lifts the curtain for us. So, Mr. Newbolt, would you please cut the cackle, and get to Roland's horses and men at once? There we are glad to be with you. The poet has done excellent work in rendering from the records the crusading of Richard Cœur de Lion and St. Louis of France, of Robin Hood's fight in the green-woods against established authority, of Berthand du Guesclin and the Black Prince, and of the Chevalier Bayard.

The picture-books are few this year. We miss most of the artists. But here is a "Rackham Book," where the famous illustrator has found a happy subject in the Romance of King Arthur. Malory's text is not to be trifled with, but Mr. A. W. Pollard has abridged the original quite well. In a picture-book, however, the illustrations are what we look for chiefly, and Mr. Rackham presents us with Lyonesse and its magic beyond doubt.

The task of writing the history of the war for the children is one most men who have been "in it" would escape from, even if it meant "going over the bags" again. But it has been done, of course, and Sir Edward Parrott has done it very well for elder boys in "The Children's Story of the War." The account of the Somme, with very good maps, occupies most of the volume, and is a lucid narrative of the greatest battle the British ever fought, and perhaps will ever fight.

In Mr. D. A. Mackenzie's war-book there is a simpler description of the great soldiers and sailors of the war, and of some romantic episodes and personalities.

There are several excellent annuals on the odd shelf to chose from. Herbert Strang's, with its ships, trenches, and stories of life in the wilds, will please the boys; Mrs. Strang's, with its peacocks, fairies, and foxgloves, daintily pictured, will entrance the younger ones; and the "Wonder Book" and the "Children's Treasury" are such old favorites that the reminder of them is enough.

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THERE are four plays in Sir Rabindranath Tagore's new volume—"Sanyasi," "Malini," "Sacrifice," and "The King and the Queen"—but the first, second, and fourth seem to serve only as the bodyguard, the preface, and epilogue to the third. "Sanyasi" is the record of an ascetic who abandons his attitude of withdrawal from the world, his abstention from its joys, sorrows, memories, hopes, and passions, for the sake of Vasanti, whom, on his return to her village, he learns is dead. No, it is not like Anatole France's "Thaïs"; it is when artists approach theories rather similar in structure and idea that one realizes the immeasurable varieties existing among the minds and feelings of the articulate, and through them of the inarticulate. Such a reflection appears commonplace enough, but the root of good government—that is to say, of the moderate distribution of general happiness—is in its recognition, of bad in its disregard. "Malini" and "The King and Queen" are scarcely more than sketches, half episode, half rather occasional and insubstantial meditation upon the ill-consequence, the uncontrolled reactions of worldly power, itself yoked to and dominated by the system of which it is the nominal head. But these three plays, or, rather, incidents, subdued to the half-tones of the author's evasive melancholy, are apt to be a little vague in their rendering, and to be none too firmly handled and presented. An atmosphere of serenity, a dim light of penetration, they do afford, but too floating and dissolved for any but a slight and passing impression. "Sacrifice" is different. It is a perfectly definite dramatic episode of the King Govinda's effort to stay blood sacrifices from

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" . . . But I was dead, an hour or more,  
I woke when I'd already barred the door  
That Cerberus guards, and half-way down the road  
To Lethe, as an old Greek signpost showed,  
Above me, on my stretcher swinging by,  
I saw new stars in the subterrene sky:  
A Cross, a Rose in bloom, a Cage with bars,  
And a barbed Arrow feathered in fine stars.  
I felt the vapors of forgetfulness  
Float in my nostrils. Oh, may Heaven bless  
Dear Lady Proserpine, who saw me wake,  
And, stooping over me, for Enna's sake,  
Cleared my poor, buzzing head and sent me back  
Breathless, with leaping heart along the track.  
After me roared and clattered angry hosts  
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Or:—

"God, that I might see  
Framilode once again!  
Redmarley all renewed,  
Clear, shining after rain."

"And Cranham, Cranham trees,  
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"and he was back upon the sofa, and somebody had put into his hand a large clean handkerchief. He wondered why, and looked up at the doctor to find out, but the doctor had turned his back on him."

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she has been a light and true heart and has moved among debased and criminal beings like a dancing star. Her fall is caused by her discovery that her father had turned coin in order to be able to find the money to pay for her dancing lessons. Mr. Burke's object may be the admirable one of showing the heart of good in things evil. Unfortunately, the demonstration does not quite convince us, because we suspect that the evidence is being "faked." We do not doubt that a thousand lovely souls may flourish in the foulest and most detestable circumstances; but we do doubt that after they have so flourished, a mere police conviction would tumble them headlong to the devil. A real tragedy can never be founded on a misrepresentation of human nature. Mr. Burke's book is sensationalism and sentimentalism and humor; but it is not life. It is simply a magnificent poster of the Wild East End.

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#### 11 The Quest of Ledger Dunstan

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#### 12 More Nursery Rhymes of London Town

### *The Authors of these books are*

#### 1 Reginald Berkeley and James Dixon

#### 2 John L. Carter

#### 3 Miss Dorothy Richardson

#### 4 Mrs. Victor Rickard

#### 5 William Hewlett

#### 6 E. L. Grant Watson

#### 7 Mrs. W. K. Clifford

#### 8 Mrs. Stanley Wrench

#### 9 Paul Creswick

#### 10 Mrs. Elinor Glyn

#### 11 A. T. Sheppard

#### 12 Miss Eleanor Farjeon

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on the high seas. In a tavern at Bristol, Captain Knot learns this from one seafaring man, and from another, the last that is known of her. Let the reader learn that for himself; it is pure tragedy.

A love-story, as we said; the old Quaker captain and the doomed, lovely ship will live among our memories of beauty and of pathos. Rightly did this tale come last. The rest, read earlier, were well enough—the buried treasure of Mortallone, the three pirate-women and the listening crippled boy, nephew of Aunt Trinidad . . . they are exercises in a style, and admirable exercises, full of romance and grim, gross humor and adventure; but after "Captain Knot," how negligible! With a sense of pride and gratitude we accept at least this kind of secret treaty: and we acknowledge the Last Story.

#### BOOKS IN BRIEF.

"The Wiltshire that Was." By EDWARD HUTTON. (Macmillan.)

To Mr. Edward Hutton (whose book on Wiltshire has just been added to the "Highways and Byways" series), the churches of the county and its antiquarian remains are its chief, if not only, claim to interest. This is disappointing. The engaging character of most of the "Highways and Byways" series has been that of the holiday gossip discoursing about his own favorite country to readers whose large love of rural England makes them friendly and indulgent hearers. But the England they are curious about is the abundant living England of to-day. Familiar only with the general scene—the little streams and rounded hills, the roads winding between flowering hedgerows, the peace of the valleys and the solemn downs—they expect their author to tell them something about the share of the local folk in the development of the whole drama of contemporary England.

Instead, Mr. Hutton leads us from one Wiltshire church to another. Opening the book at random at pages 92 and 93, one finds eight paragraphs, of which five begin thus—"All that is left of the old church," "Behind the church is," "At West Grinstead there is a little old church," "At Alderbury the church has been rebuilt," "Farley is chiefly to be seen for the sake of the church,"—and this a fair sample. Wiltshire, of course, is rich in beautiful churches and old monuments and Mr. Hutton tells their stories with vast learning and describes them with expert particularity, but the inevitable result is that his Wiltshire is a Wiltshire that is dead and gone.

Not only so, but it is with the priests and lords of Wiltshire's past that he is almost exclusively concerned. Mr. W. H. Hudson, in "A Shepherd's Life," pieced together from the gravestones in the Wiltshire churchyards a fascinating picture of the life of the common people of the county in the extraordinarily interesting days of the laborers' revolt; but Mr. Hutton is engrossed with the monuments and effigies of the "great" ones to be found inside the churches, and the result is, of course, a very different Wiltshire. In Mr. Hudson's case the picture has the virtue of being intimately related to the Wiltshire of the present day. The people he tells us of not only lived their hard yet not unlovely lives in the same setting of austere plain and wooded vale which exists to-day, but they were the immediate ancestors of the Wiltshire folk of these times. Mr. Hutton's lords and bishops, on the other hand, have no relation whatever to modern Wiltshire. They are as extinct as their religious and political theories. However, Mr. Hutton is a very painstaking guide to the historical features of the county which attracts him, and the illustrations by Nelly Erichsen are charming.

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"Recollections of Seventy-two Years." By the Hon. WILLIAM WARREN VERNON. (Murray. 12s. net.)

Mr. Vernon, author of "Readings on the Paradiso," has devoted his life to the study of Dante, wishing for nothing better than "to deserve to be called a Dantist." Before publication those reminiscences were, by advice, reduced by two-fifths. Much remains. We are told of all the great people Mr. Vernon has known and seen (most of whom bear

titles). To preserve the continuity of the narrative bits of history are slipped in. We are informed that on such a day Lord Roberts returned from South Africa, the date of Queen Victoria's death and burial, and that in 1906 "England was put under the despotic rule of the most extreme Radical Ministry of modern times." There are many thin stories and some interesting ones. When the author was at Eton there was a young competitor named Swinburne in the Italian and French examinations. "In the French examination, when M. Delille made us his annual valedictory harangue, he spoke in terms of great commendation of 'votre jeune camarade, le petit Swainburne,' adding: 'Faites-en compte, messieurs, il vous fait honneur.' I do not remember that much *compte* was paid to Swinburne, except perhaps twisting his arm, and the bestowal on him of a stray kick or two."

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"Thomas Woolner, R.A.: His Life and Letters." By his Daughter, AMY WOOLNER. (Chapman & Hall. 18s. net.)

NEWMAN spoke of the "smooth and calm tenor" of Thomas Woolner's verses. There were the same qualities in his sculpture and in his life. He was a noteworthy figure of his time. A younger generation, to whom he may be but a dim shade, will learn from this volume how large a part Woolner played in the story of Victorian art. He sculptured figures and portrait busts of most of his great contemporaries. Nearly all the Olympians are to be met here—Carlyle, Tennyson, Browning, Ruskin, the Rossettis, Darwin (who asks Woolner to persuade some "trustworthy" artists to observe in inexperienced models how low down the body the first blushes extend), Gladstone, Kingsley and Newman. It is a happy mutual admiration society we see in this correspondence, though Carlyle affords a little relief by speaking out "with profound contempt of Ruskin because the little Art Deity called 'Aurora Leigh' the finest poem by far of the present age." Ruskin is also rather badly handled by Rossetti, whose letters have in them more of reality, criticism, and humor than have any of the others. Woolner's achievements in sculpture and poetry were not of the greatest, but he was an artist of distinction, devoted in the service of his ideal, and, as this estimable volume shows, revered by the discerning of his day.

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"The Life and Letters of Admiral Sir Charles Napier." By H. NOEL WILLIAMS. (Hutchinson. 16s. net.)

THIS biography is particularly valuable because it contains all the correspondence which passed between Sir Charles Napier and the Admiralty, when he was in command of the fleet operating in the Baltic in 1854. Amid scenes of "almost delirious" enthusiasm and the usual chanting of songs to "bluff old Charley," this fleet left for the Baltic "totally unprovided with gunboats and smaller vessels of light draught, absolutely indispensable for the success of any enterprise amid the creeks and shallows of the Baltic"; for there is no stupidity so inevitable and profound as that of the expert war-mongers when they get down to their own particular business. In this case they refused to recognise the primary fact that the Baltic is shallow, and that it freezes over in winter. This correspondence also brightly illuminates the consequences of busybodies interfering with military strategy. In the instance under review they ordered actions to be taken which a glance at a chart would have shown them was impossible. They completely disregarded sea-depth, weather conditions, and practically all the circumstances which would set limits to the work of the Admiral's ships. In fact, even when set out coldly as veritable documents, this part of our war with Russia, involving thousands of lives and vast sums of public money, reads now like the work of happy imbeciles in grotesquely comic opera. This very interesting biography of an excellent sailor does not tell us whether the public cheered him on his return; though it does inform us that the enthusiastic but ignorant descriptions of the ships in the daily press of the day when the fleet left Spithead, outward bound, made the public suppose Cronstadt was to be captured at once. Or was it Moscow?



